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FM AMEMBASSY MADRID

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 2645

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, SP

SUBJECT: INTERNAL POLITICAL SITUATION - COMMENTS BY INTERIOR
MINISTER FRAGA

SUMMARY. FRAGA REMAINS OPTIMISTIC ON REFORM PROGRAM WHILE
BEING CONCERNED BY POLITICAL POLARIZATION. HE EXPRESSED
IRRITATION OVER AGREEMENT ON PLATAJUNTA AT A TIME
GOVERNMENT WAS IN NEGOTIATION WITH CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS
AND SOCIALISTS. ARIAS TO MAKE TWO SPEECHES SUMMING UP
GOVERNMENT'S PROGRAM TO DATE AND TIMETABLE FOR FUTURE.
SOCIALIST TRADE UNION UGT TO BE PERMITTED TO HOLD CONGRESS.
END SUMMARY.

1. WHEN I SAW INTERIOR MINISTER FRAGA APRIL 5 HE
EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD BE ABLE
TO KEEP THE SITUATION UNDER CONTROL AND THAT ITS REFORM
PROGRAM BOTH IN SUBSTANCE AND IN TIMING WOULD BE CARRIED
OUT. HE INDICATED THAT ALTHOUGH THERE WERE DIFFERING
CURRENTS WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT THERE WAS NO SERIOUS
FRICTION. HE ALLUDED TO REPORTS LAST WEEK CONCERNING
FOREIGN MINISTER'S THREATENED RESIGNATION OVER THE
ARREST OF CERTAIN PERSONS WHO HAD DEFIED THE
GOVERNMENT'S BAN ON THE HOLDING OF THE PRESS CON-
FERENCE FOR THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF COORDINACION DEMOCRATICA
(BETTER KNOWN LOCALLY AS PLATAJUNTA). FRAGA SAID THAT
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OBTAINING EACH MINISTER HAS HIS PARTICULAR OBJECTIVE.

AREILZA DIDN'T WANT ANYTHING TO INTERFERE WITH HIS TRIP TO ITALY NEXT WEEK, WHILE FRAGA COULD NOT ACCEPT THE APPEARANCE OF PLATAJUNTA WITH POSSIBLE DOMINATION BY THE COMMUNISTS. FRAGA SAID HE HAD LUNCH WITH AREILZA ON SATURDAY (WHICH AREILZA ALSO HAD TOLD ME) AND THAT THERE WAS NO DIVERGENCE IN THEIR POINTS OF VIEW. FRAGA ADDED THAT ALL PERSONS ARRESTED WERE COMMUNISTS.

2. FRAGA MAINTAINED THAT UP UNTIL NOW THE GOVERNMENT HAD MADE CONSIDERABLE PROGRESS IN BRINGING BEFORE THE CORTES THE VARIOUS REFORM MEASURES AND HE SEEMD CONFIDENT THAT CORTES ACTION ON THESE MEASURES WOULD FOLLOW WITHOUT MUCH DELAY. IN REPLY TO MY QUESTION AS TO WHETHER THE PRIME MINISTER WOULD PLAY A MORE LEADING ROLE, FRAGA SAID THAT IT WAS EXPECTED THAT IN THE NEAR FUTURE THE PRIME MINISTER WOULD GIVE A TELEVISED SPEECH SUMMING UP ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE AND SETTING FORTH THE GOVERNMENT'S PLANS FOR THE FUTURE. ARIAS WOULD ALSO PERSONALLY PRESENT THE LAW ON POLITICAL ASSOCIATIONS TO THE CORTES COMMITTEE. FRAGA COMMENTED THAT ARIAS WAS NOT IN THE BEST OF HEALTH AND THAT HE HAD BEEN PARTICULARLY AFFECTED BY FRANCO'S DEATH. WHILE HE WAS APT TO SPEND A GOOD DEAL OF TIME EXPLAINING MATTERS TO THE RIGHT, THE FACT REMAINS THAT ARIAS HAS ACCEPTED REFORM PROGRAM.

3. FRAGA EXPRESSED CONSIDERABLE IRRITATION WITH THE DECISION OF CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT RUIZ GIMENEZ AND SOCIALIST FELIPE GONZALEZ TO AGREE TO A COALITION WITH THE COMMUNIST-DOMINATED JUNTA DEMOCRATICA. THIS HAD COME AT A TIME WHEN THE GOVERNMENT WAS IN NEGOTIATION WITH THESE GROUPS AND DEMONSTRATED THE UNRELIABILITY OF THE PEOPLE CONCERNED. FRAGA SAID THAT RUIZ GIMENEZ WAS INFLUENCED BY THE FACT THAT HIS SONS ARE COMMUNISTS AND BY THE OFFER THAT HAS BEEN MADE TO HIM TO BE PRIME MINISTER OF A "PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT" IF THE OPPOSITION SHOULD COME TO POWER. WITH REGARD TO FELIPE GONZALEZ FRAGA COMMENTED THAT HE HAD INDICATED TO THE GOVERNMENT'S EMISSARIES THAT HE DID NOT WISH TO MAKE COMMON CAUSE WITH THE COMMUNISTS. HIS CHANGE OF MIND WITHIN THE SPACE OF

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A VERY SHORT TIME SHOWED THAT HE WAS NOT RELIABLE. FRAGA SAID THAT THE GERMAN SPD WHO GIVE GONZOLEZ CONSIDERABLE FINANCIAL SUPPORT WOULD TRY TO BRING HIM AROUND.

4. REGARDING THE COMMUNISTS FRAGA INDICATED THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD MADE CLEAR THAT IF THEY WOULD REMAIN QUIET FOR A YEAR AND A HALF, THEN THE GOVERNMENT WOULD BE WILLING TO REVIEW THE PRESENT BAN ON THEM.

UNFORTUNATELY, THE COMMUNISTS WERE CHOOSING TO DO JUST THE OPPOSITE AND THIS IN TURN PROVOKED THE RIGHTIST FORCES.

5. FRAGA EXPRESSED SOME CONCERN REGARDING THE TENDENCY TO POLARIZE POLITICAL FORCES WHICH HE SAID HAD ALWAYS BEEN ONE OF SPAIN'S CURSES. HE CONTINUED TO BE PREOCCUPIED BY THE LARGE NUMBER OF POLITICAL GROUPINGS AND IT REMAINED ONE OF HIS AIMS TO TRY TO CORRECT THIS SITUATION. AFTER LAW ON POLITICAL ASSOCIATIONS HAD BEEN PASSED, HE WOULD DEVOTE A GOOD DEAL OF HIS OWN TIME TO TRYING TO DEVELOP HIS OWN CENTER FORMATION.

6. FRAGA COMMENTED ON THE SUCCESS OF THE KING'S VISIT TO ANDALUCIA. WHEN ASKED WHETHER THESE SUCCESSFUL VISITS MIGHT LEAD TO AN EARLY REFERENDUM ON CERTAIN MATTERS NOW PENDING IN THE CORTES, FRAGA SAID HE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE A SERIOUS MISTAKE FOR THE KING TO TRY TO USE THIS METHOD BEFORE THE CORTES HAD BEEN GIVEN A CHANCE TO ACT. THIS SORT OF THING HAD LED TO GREAT TROUBLES FOR HIS GRANDFATHER, ALFONSO XIII. FRAGA BELIEVED THAT IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO HOLD A REGULAR REFERENDUM IN SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER TIME FRAME, WITH MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS IN NOVEMBER. HE DOUBTED WHETHER ANY EARLIER DATE WOULD BE FEASIBLE.

7. SUMMING UP FRAGA SAID THAT ON THE QUESTIONS OF TERRORISM, COMMUNISM AND SEPARATISM THE GOVERNMENT COULD NOT COMPROMISE. ALTHOUGH THE ARMY HAD ACCEPTED THAT SPAIN NEEDED A SOCIALIST PARTY, ARMY SUPPORT FOR REFORM WOULD BE LOST IF THERE SHOULD BE LEGALIZATION OF COMMUNIST ACTIVITIES. FRAGA SAID THAT THERE WOULD, OF COURSE, BE MANY DIFFICULTIES ON THE ROAD AHEAD AND

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THE FIRST OF MAY LOOMED AS A DAY OF PARTICULAR TENSION, BUT HE REMAINED CONFIDENT REGARDING THE FUTURE.

8. IN RESPONSE TO MY QUESTION CONCERNING WHETHER OR NOT THE GOVERNMENT PLANNED TO BAN THE CONGRESS LATER THIS MONTH OF THE SOCIALIST TRADE UNION UGT, FRAGA REPLIED THAT HE AND MINISTER OF SYNDICAL AFFAIRS MARTIN VILLA WERE IN AGREEMENT THAT THE CONGRESS SHOULD BE AUTHORIZED. HOWEVER, IN LIGHT OF SOCIALIST ACTIONS IN JOINING PLATAJUNTA, THE GOVERNMENT WAS PREPARED TO MAKE THE UGT SEAT IT OUT UNTIL ALMOST THE LAST INUTE. THE GOVERNMENT WOULD, OF COURSE, INSIST ON GUARANTEES BY THE UGT THAT THE CONGRESS WOULD BE PEACEFUL AND ORDERLY.

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